

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 03741 01 OF 02 272238Z
ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 03741
LIMDIS
WHITE HOUSE FOR RICK HERTZBERG

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: SPEECHES

1. THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS OF THE POST
ON THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS WHILE IN PANAMA.
2. IN HIS SPEECHES IN PANAMA CITY (I.E. OUTSIDE THE ZONE)
THE PRESIDENT SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE COOPERATION WHICH
MADE THE TREATY POSSIBLE AND OUR CONFIDENCE THAT SUCH
COOPERATION WILL BE--INDEED MUST BE--CONTINUED AND GREATLY
INCREASED IN THE YEARS AHEAD. THE PRESIDENT SHOULD BE
WARM AND FRIENDLY TOWARD TORRIJOS AND HIS GOVERNMENT. ON
THE OTHER HAND, THIS WARMTH SHOULD NOT BE SO GREAT AS TO
APPEAR THAT WE ARE "GETTING INTO BED WITH" TORRIJOS.
TORRIJOS IS, AFTER ALL, AN AUTHORITARIAN MILITARY RULER;
AND PANAMA HAS AN ACTIVE "DEMOCRATIC" POLITICAL-PARTY-
BASED OPPOSITION. THIS OPPOSITION HAS, FOR THE MOST PART,
OPPOSED PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THEY
BELIEVE IT STRENGTHENS TORRIJOS' HOLD ON POWER.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE HUMAN RIGHTS SHOULD
BE GIVEN GREAT PROMINENCE IN THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS.
- CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PANAMA 03741 01 OF 02 272238Z

TORRIJOS' RECORD HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY DURING THE PAST
FEW YEARS, AND WE HAVE NO INDICATION OF ANY PROSPECT OF
BACKSLIDING IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. EVEN SO, PANAMA'S
RECORD IS STILL ONLY FAIRLY GOOD. IN OTHER WORDS, THE
PANAMANIAN ARE DOING WELL ENOUGH FOR US NOT TO HECTOR
THEM, BUT NOT SO WELL THAT WE SHOULD THROW ANY UNNECESSARY
BOUQUETS. IF THE PRESIDENT DECIDES TO INCLUDE A MENTION

OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WE BELIEVE IT SHOULD BE IN THE NATURE OF A GENERAL STATEMENT THAT WE CONTINUE TO BE VERY INTERESTED IN THIS AREA. A FAIRLY LIGHT TOUCH WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO SEND THE MESSAGE.

4. EXCEPT FOR THE GLAMOR AND LEGITIMATION WHICH COME WITH SUCH A VISIT, WE BELIEVE TORRIJOS WANTS ABOVE ALL A CONVINCING STATEMENT FROM PRESIDENT CARTER THAT THE U.S. HAS NO INTENTION OF INTERVENING IN PANAMA'S AFFAIRS. MOST PANAMANIAN KNOW WHAT ARTICLE IV OF THE NEUTRALITY TREATY AND THE DE CONCINI AMENDMENT MEAN. THEY ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. WILL TAKE MILITARY ACTION, IF NECESSARY, TO PROTECT ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS, REGARDLESS OF TREATY RIGHTS. BUT THEY WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO HEAR PRESIDENT CARTER GIVE A STRONG REAFFIRMATION OF OUR ADHERENCE TO THE NON-INTERVENTION PRINCIPLE.

5. ONE OF OUR GREATEST PROBLEMS HERE OVER THE NEXT TWO OR THREE YEARS WILL CENTER AROUND THE PERSONNEL PROBLEM OF THE PANAMA CANAL COMPANY AND ITS SUCCESSOR COMMISSION. IN PRACTICAL TERMS, AT LEAST AS FAR AS PANAMA IS CONCERNED, THE PRESIDENT COULD DO NOTHING MORE CONSTRUCTIVE THAN REASSURE THE AMERICAN AND PANAMANIAN (INCLUDING WEST INDIAN) EMPLOYEES. REGARDLESS OF NATIONALITY, MOST OF THESE PEOPLE OPPOSED THE TREATIES. MOST OF THE AMERICANS ARE NOT SUPPORTERS OF PRESIDENT CARTER, BUT THEY ARE LOYAL AND WELL-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PANAMA 03741 01 OF 02 272238Z

INTENTIONED AMERICANS WHO HAVE TAKEN ENORMOUS PRIDE IN THE JOB THEY HAVE DONE HERE. MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE WILL NEED THE SERVICES OF A GREAT MANY OF THEM IF THE CANAL TREATY IS TO WORK PROPERLY. THEREFORE, WE HOPE THE PRESIDENT WILL PRAISE THE PEOPLE--REGARDLESS OF NATIONALITY--WHO HAVE BUILT, OPERATED, MAINTAINED AND DEFENDED THIS CANAL SO LONG AND SO WELL. HE SHOULD SAY THAT REASONABLE MEN CAN DIFFER ON QUESTIONS SUCH AS THE CANAL ISSUE, BUT EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR PULLING TOGETHER TO DO A NECESSARY JOB, EVEN WHEN PERSONAL SACRIFICE MAY BE INVOLVED. AT THE SAME TIME, HE SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE ADMINISTRATION'S DETERMINATION TO DO ALL IT CAN TO ASSURE THAT EVERY AMERICAN EMPLOYEE AND EVERY PANAMANIAN EMPLOYEE WILL GET AS FAIR A DEAL AS POSSIBLE. (CAVEAT: THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE RELATIVELY LITTLE CONTROL OVER THE FATE OF THOSE PANAMANIAN EMPLOYEES WHOSE FUNCTIONS PASS TO PANAMA UNDER THE TREATY. ONE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO PROMISE WHERE WE CANNOT FULFILL.) IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE PRESIDENT MAKE A STATEMENT ALONG THESE LINES IN PANAMA AS WELL AS IN THE ZONE. THIS WOULD ACCORD WELL WITH THE POLICY OF THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT (WHICH RECOGNIZES THE PROBLEM), AND IT WOULD BE MORE REASSURING TO THE ZONE RESIDENTS IF THE PRESIDENT

WERE SAYING THE SAME THING TO BOTH AUDIENCES.

6. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THE PRESIDENT TO MAKE A BRIEF REFERENCE TO THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION WHICH HAS GONE ON FOR YEARS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND PANAMA, AND HE SHOULD PLEDGE TO CONTINUE THAT COOPERATION. HE SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE CAREFUL TO AVOID GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT THE U.S. IS ABOUT TO EMBARK ON A MASSIVE AID CAMPAIGN. PANAMA IS IN CONSIDERABLE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTY AND ONE NOTES HERE A GROWING EXPECTATION (OR HOPE) THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WILL BAIL IT OUT. TO FAIL TO MENTION MILITARY COOPERATION WOULD PROBABLY BE NOTED HERE AND GIVEN AN UNINTENDED MEANING. THEREFORE, WE HOPE THE PRESIDENT WILL BRIEFLY STATE THAT THE U.S. LOOKS FORWARD TO COOPERATION WITH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PANAMA 03741 01 OF 02 272238Z

PANAMA IN THE DEFENSE OF THE CANAL.

NOTE BY OC/T: LIMDIS CAPTION ADDED AND DISSEMINATION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O - MR. SCOTT.

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 03741 02 OF 02 272241Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 03741
LIMDIS
WHITE HOUSE FOR RICK HERTZBERG

7. IN VIEW OF PANAMA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, IT WOULD BE NICE IF THE PRESIDENT COULD BRING WITH HIM SOME GOOD ECONOMIC NEWS. PROBABLY THE MOST WELCOME AT THIS POINT WOULD BE INCLUSION OF PANAMA IN THE GENERAL SCHEDULE OF

PREFERENCES (GSP), FOR WHICH IT IS ELIGIBLE. EVEN IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, THE PRESIDENT MIGHT EXPLAIN BRIEFLY OUR SUGAR POLICY AND OUR INTENTION TO GIVE PANAMA A BETTER BREAK WHEN WE CAN.

8. THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN PANAMA IS GREDUALLY HEATING UP AND WE WILL, OF COURSE, BE REPORTING ON THIS AS IT DEVELOPS. IT NOW SEEMS THAT FORMER PRESIDENT ARNULFO ARIAS (THRICE ELECTED; THRICE EJECTED BY THE NATIONAL GUARD) WILL RETURN FROM A TEN-YEAR EXILE SIX DAYS BEFORE THE PRESIDENT'S ARRIVAL. IN ADDITION, PANAMA IS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF AN ELECTION WHICH WILL POPULARLY CHOOSE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF PANAMA'S 505 LOCAL COMMUNITIES (CORREGIMIENTOS). THESE ELECTIONS WILL PROBABLY BE FREE, AND THE REPRESENTATIVES WILL SIT IN THE QUASI-LEGISLATIVE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES, WHICH INTER ALIA ELECTS THE PRESIDENT. BUT THESE REPRESENTATIVES' POWER IS QUITE LIMITED--ESPECIALLY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. THE PRESIDENT SHOULD BEWARE OF MAKING TOO MUCH OF

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 03741 02 OF 02 272241Z

THE ELECTIONS, THOUGH IT IS TRUE THAT THE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM, WHICH TORRIJOS CREATED, APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A CONSIDERABLE STEP FORWARD IN GIVING GREATER VIGOR TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

9. THE EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON A DRAFT OF THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH. JORDEN

NOTE BY OC/T: LIMDIS CAPTION ADDED AND DISSEMINATION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O - MR. SCOTT.

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